

MIS S in her TEENS.

Written by GARRICK.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Sir SIMON LOVEIT.

Captain LOVEIT.

FRIBBLE.

FLASH.

Puff.

JASPER.

Miss BIDDY.

AUNT.

TAG.

ACT I. SCENE I.

SCENE, A Street.

Enter Captain Loveit and Puff.

Capt. THIS is the place we were directed to; and now, Puff, if I can get no intelligence of her, what will become of me?

Puff. And me too, Sir—you must consider I am a marry'd man, and can't bear fatigue as I have done. But pray, Sir, why did you leave the army so abruptly, and not give me time to fill my knapsack with common necessaries? half a dozen shirts, and your regimentals, are my whole cargo.

Capt. I was wild to get away; and as soon as I obtained my leave of absence, I thought every moment an age till I return'd to the place where I first saw this young, charming, innocent, bewitching creature.

Puff. With fifteen thousand pounds for her fortune—strong motives, I must confess.—And now, Sir, as you are pleas'd to say you must depend upon my care and abilities in this affair, I think I have a just right to be acquainted with the particulars of your passion, that I may be the better enabled to serve you.

Capt. You shall have 'em.—When I left the university, which is now seven months since, my father, who loves his money better than his son, and would not settle a farthing upon me—

Puff. Mine did so by me, Sir—

Capt. Purchas'd me a pair of colours at my own request; but before I join'd the regiment, which was going abroad, I took a ramble into the country with a fellow-collegian, to see a relation of his who lived in Berkshire.—

Puff.—A party of pleasure, I suppose.

Capt. During a short stay there, I came acquainted with this young creature; she was just come from the boarding-school, and tho' she had all the simplicity of her age and the country, yet it was mix'd with such sensible vivacity, that I took fire at once.—

Puff. I was tinder myself at your age. But pray, Sir, did you take fire before you knew of her fortune?

Capt. Before, upon my honour.

Puff. Folly and constitution—but on, Sir.

Capt. I was introduced to the family by the name of Rhodophil, (for so my companion and I had settled it;) at the end of three weeks I was oblig'd to attend the call of honour in Flanders.

Puff. Your parting, to be sure, was heart-breaking.

Capt. I feel it at this instant. We vow'd eternal constancy, and I promis'd to take the first opportunity of returning to her: I did so; but we found the house was shut up, and all the information, you know, that we could get from the neighbouring cottage was, that Miss and her aunt were removed to town, and liv'd somewhere near this part of it.

Puff. And now we are got to the place of action, propose your plan of operation.

Capt. My father lives but in the next street, so I must decamp immediately for fear of discoveries; you are not known to be my servant, so make what inquiries you can in the neighbourhood, and I shall wait at the inn for your intelligence.

Puff. I'll patrol hereabouts, and examine all that pass; but I've forgot the word, Sir—Miss Biddy—

Capt. Bellair.—

Puff. A young lady of wit, beauty, and fifteen thousand pounds fortune—but Sir—

Capt. What do you say, Puff?

Puff. If your honour pleases to consider that I had a wife in town whom I left somewhat abruptly half a year ago, you'll think it, I believe, but decent to make some enquiry after her first, to be sure it would be some small consolation to me to know whether the poor woman is living, or has made away with herself, or—

Capt. Prythee don't distract me; a moment's delay is of the utmost consequence; I must insist

upon an immediate compliance with my commands.

[Exit Captain.]

Puff. The devil's in these fiery young fellows: they think of no body's wants but their own. He does not consider that I am flesh and blood as well as himself. However, I may kill two birds at once; for I shan't be surprized if I meet my lady walking the streets—but who have we here? Sure I should know that face.

Enter Jasper from a House.

Who's that? my old acquaintance Jasper?

Jasper. What, Puff! are you here?

Puff. My dear friend! [*Kisses him.*] Well, and now Jasper, still easy and happy! *toujours le même!* what intrigues now? what girls have you ruin'd, and what cuckolds made, since you and I used to beat up together, eh?

Jasper. Faith, business has been very brisk during the war; men are scarce, you know; not that I can say I ever wanted amusement in the worst of times—but hark'e, Puff—

Puff. Not a word aloud, I am incognito.

Jasper. Why faith, I should not have known you, if you had not spoke first; you seem to be a little dishabille too, as well as incognito. Whom do you honour with your service now? are you from the wars?

Puff. Piping hot, I assure you; fire and smoke will tarnish; a man that will go into such service as I have been in, will find his clothes the worse for wear, take my word for it: but how is it with you, friend Jasper? What you still serve, I see? you live at that house I suppose?

Jasper. I don't absolutely live, but I am most of my time there; I have within these two months enter'd into the service of an old gentleman, who hired a reputable servant, and dressed him as you see, because he has taken it into his head to fail in love.

Puff. False appetite and second childhood! but prythee, what's the object of his passion?

Jasper. No less than a virgin of sixteen, I assure you.

Puff. Oh, the toothless old dotard!

Jasper. And he mumbles and plays with her till his mouth waters; then he chuckles till he cries, and calls it his Bid and his Biddy, and is so foolishly fond—

Puff. Biddy! what's that?

Jasper.—Her name is Biddy.

Puff. Biddy! what Miss Biddy Bellair?

Jasper. The same—

Puff. I have no luck, to be sure. [*Aside.*]—Oh! I have heard of her; she's of a pretty good family, and has some fortune, I know. But are things settled? is the marriage fix'd?

Jasper. Not absolutely; the girl, I believe, detests him; but her aunt, a very good prudent old lady, has given her consent, if he can gain her niece's; how it will end I can't tell—but I am not upon myself.

Puff. The devil! not marriage, I hope.

Jasper. That is not yet determined.

Puff. What is the lady, pray?

Jasper. A maid in the same family, a woman of honour, I assure you: she has one husband already, a scoundrel sort of a fellow that has run away from her, and lifted for a soldier; so towards the end of the campaign she hopes to have a certificate he's knock'd o'h head; if not, I suppose, we shall settle matters another way.

Puff. Well, speed the plough—but hark'e, don't summate without the certificate if you can—keep

your neck out of the collar—do—I have wore it these two years, and damnably galled I am—

Jasper. I'll take your advice; but I must run away to my master, who will be impatient for an answer to his message which I have just deliver'd to the young lady; so, dear Mr. Puff, I am your most obedient humble servant.

Puff. And I must to our agent's for my arrears: if you have an hour to spare, you'll hear of me at George's, or the Tilt-yard—*au revoir*, as we say abroad.—[Exit Jasper.]—Thus we are as civil and as false as our betters; Jasper and I were always the *beau monde* exactly; we ever hated one another heartily, yet always kiss and shake hands—But now to my master with a head full of news, and a heart full of joy.

[Going, starts.]

“Angels and ministers of grace defend me!”
It can't be! by heav'n's, it is that fretful porcupine, my wife! I can't stand it; what shall I do? I'll try to avoid her.

Enter Tag.

Tag. It must be he! I'll (wear to the rogue at a mile's distance; he either has not seen me, or won't know me. If I can keep my temper I'll try him farther.

Puff. I sweat—I tremble—she comes upon me!

Tag. Pray, good Sir, if I may be so bold—

Puff. I have nothing for you good woman, don't trouble me.

Tag. If your honour pleases to look this way—

Puff. The kingdom is over-run with beggars; I suppose the last I gave to has sent this; but I have no more loose silver about me; so prythee, woman, don't disturb me.

Tag. I can hold no longer; oh you villain, you! where have you been, scoundrel? do you know me now, varlet?

[Seizes him.]

Puff. Here, watch, watch; zounds I shall have my pockets pick'd.

Tag. Own me this minute, hang, hang-dog, and confess every thing, or by the rage of an injured woman, I'll raise the neighbourhood, throttle you, and send you to Newgate.

Puff. Amazement! what, my own dear Tag! Come to my arms, and let me press you to my heart, that pants for thee, and only thee, my true and lawful wife.—Now my stars have overpaid me for the fatigue and dangers of the field; I have wandered about like Achilles in search of faithful Penelope, and the gods have brought me to this happy spot.

[Embraces her.]

Tag. The fellow's crack'd for certain! leave your bombastick stuff, and tell me, rascal, why you left me, and where you have been these six months, heh?

Puff. We'll reserve my adventures for our happy winter evenings—I shall only tell you now, that my heart beat so strong in my country's cause, and being instigated either by honour or the devil, (I can't tell which) I set out for Flanders, to gather laurels, and lay 'em at thy feet.

Tag. You left me to starve, villain, and beg my bread, you did so.

Puff. I left you too hastily, I must confess, and often has my conscience stung me for it.—I am got into an officer's service, have been in several actions, gained some credit by my behaviour, and am now returned with my master to indulge the genteeler passions.

Tag. Don't think to fob me off with this nonsensical talk; what have you brought me home besides?

Puff. Honour, and immoderate love.

Tag. I could tear your eyes out.

Puff. Temperance, or I walk off.

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Tag. Temperance, traitor, temperance! what can you say for yourself! leave me to the wide world—

Puff. Well, I have been in the wide world too, hasn't I? what would the woman have?

Tag. Reduce me to the necessity of going to service.

Puff. Why, I'm in service too, your lord and master an't I, you saucy jade you?—come, where do you live, hereabouts? hast good vails? dost go to market? come, give me a kiss, darling, and tell me where I shall pay my duty to thee.

Tag. Why there I live, at that house.

[*Pointing to the House Jasper came out of.*]

Puff. What, there; that house.

Tag. Yes, there, that house.

Puff. Huzza! we're made for ever, you flut you! huzza! every thing conspires this day to make me happy—prepare for an inundation of joy! my master is in love with your Miss Biddy over head and ears, and she with him: I know she is courted by some old fumbler, and her aunt is not against the match; but now we are come the town will be reliev'd, and the governor brought over: in plain English, our fortune is made; my master must marry the lady, and the old gentleman may go to the devil.

Tag. Heyday! what's all this?

Puff. Say no more, the dice are thrown, doublets for us; away to your young mistress, while I run to my master, tell her Rhodophil! Rhodophil! will be with her immediately; then if her blood does not mount to her face like quicksilver in a weather-glass, and point to extreme hot, believe the whole a lye, and your husband no politician.

Tag. This is news indeed! I have had the place but a little while, and have not quite got into the secrets of the family; but part of your story is true, and if you bring your master, and Miss is willing, I warrant we'll be too hard for the old folks.

Puff. I'll about it straight!—but hold, Tag, I had forgot—Pray how does Mr. Jasper, do?

Tag. Mr. Jasper!—What do you mean? I—I—I—

Puff. What, out of countenance, child; oh fy! Speak plain, my dear—and the certificate, when comes that, heh, love?

Tag. He has sold himself and turn'd conjuror, or he could never have known it.

Puff. Are not you a jade?—Are not you a Jezebel?—Arn't you a—

Tag. O ho, temperance; or I walk off—

Puff. I know I am not finish'd yet, and so I am easy, but more thanks to my fortune than your virtue, Madam.

Aunt. [*Within.*] Tag, Tag! where are you Tag?

Tag. Coming Madam—My old lady calls; away to your master, and I'll prepare his reception within.

Puff. Shall I bring the certificate with me? [*Ex.*]

Tag. Go you graceless rogue, you richly deserve it. [*Exit.*]

SCENE changes to a Chamber.

Enter Aunt and Tag.

Aunt. Who was that man you were talking to, Tag?

Tag. A cousin of mine, Madam, that brought me some news from my aunt in the country.

Aunt. Where's my niece? Why are not you with her?

Tag. She bid me leave her alone—She's so melancholy, Madam, I don't know what's come to her of late—

Aunt. The thoughtfulness that is natural upon the approach of matrimony, generally occasions a decent concern.

Tag. And do you think, Madam, a husband of threecore and five—

Aunt. Hold, Tag; he protests to me he is but five and fifty.

Tag. He is a rogue Madam, and an old rogue, which is the worst of rogues.

Aunt. Alas! youth or age, 'tis all one to her; she is all simplicity without experience; I would not force her inclinations, but she's so innocent she won't know the difference—

Tag. Innocent! ne'er trust to that Madam; I was innocent myself once, but live and learn, is an old saying, and a true one—I believe, Madam, nobody is more innocent than yourself, and a good maid you are to be sure; but tho' you really don't know the difference, yet you can fancy it, I warrant you.

Aunt. I should prefer a large jointure to a small one, and that's all; but it's impossible that Biddy should have desires, she's but newly come out of the country, and just turn'd of sixteen.

Tag. That's a ticklish age, Madam! I have observ'd she does not eat, nor she does not sleep; she sighs, and she cries, and she loves moonlight; these, I take it, are very strong symptoms.

Aunt. They are very unaccountable, I must confess; but you talk from a deprav'd mind, Tag; her's is simple and untainted.

Tag. She'll make him a cuckold tho' for all that, if you force her to marry him.

Aunt. You shock me, Tag, with your coarse expressions; I tell you, her chastity will be her guard, let her husband be what he will.

Tag. Chastity! never trust to that, Madam; get her a husband that's fit for her, and I'll be bound for her virtue; but with such a one as Sir Simon, I'm a rogue if I'd answer for my own.

Aunt. Well, Tag, the child shall never have reason to repent of my severity; I was going before to my lawyer's to speak about the articles of marriage, I will now put a stop to 'em for some time, till we can make farther discoveries.

Tag. Heav'n will bless you for your goodness; look where the poor bird comes, quite mop'd and melancholy; I'll set my pump to work, and draw something from her before you return, I warrant you. [*Exit Aunt.*] There goes a miracle; she has neither pride, envy, or ill-nature, and yet is near sixty and a virgin.

Enter Biddy.

Biddy. How unfortunate a poor girl am I! I dare not tell my secret, to any body, and if I don't I'm undone—heigho. [*Sighs.*] Pray, Tag, is my Aunt gone to her lawyer about me? Heigho!

Tag. What's that sigh for, my dear young mistress?

Biddy. I did not sigh, not I—[*Sighs.*]

Tag. Nay, never gulp 'em down; they are the worst things you can swallow. There's something in that little heart of yours, that swells it and puffs it, and will burst it at last, if you don't give it vent.

Biddy. What would you have me tell you? [*Sighs.*]

Tag. Come, come, you are afraid I'll betray you; but you had as good speak, I may do you some service you little think of.

Biddy. It is not in your power, Tag, to give me what I want. [*Sighs.*]

Tag. Not directly, perhaps; but I may be the means of helping you to it; as for example—If you should not like to marry the old man your aunt designs for you, one may find a way to break—

Biddy. His neck, Tag.

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Tag. Or the match, either will do, child.

Biddy. I don't care which, indeed, so I was clear of him—I don't think I'm fit to be marry'd.

Tag. To him, you mean—You have no objection to marriage, but the man, and I applaud you for it; but come, courage, Miss, never keep it in; out with it all.

Biddy. If you'll ask me any questions, I'll answer 'em, but I can't tell you any thing of myself, I shall blush if I do.

Tag. Well then—in the first place, pray tell me, Miss Biddy Bellair, if you don't like somebody better than old Sir Simon Loveit?

Biddy. Heigho!

Tag. What's heigho, Miss?

Biddy. When I say heigho! it means yes.

Tag. Very well; and this somebody is a young handsome fellow!

Biddy. Heigho!

Tag. And if you were once his, you'd be as merry as the best of us?

Biddy. Heigho!

Tag. So far so good; and since I have got you to wet your feet, fouse over head at once, and the pain will be over.

Biddy. There—then. [*A long sigh.*] Now, help me out, Tag, as fast as you can.

Tag. When did you hear from your gallant?

Biddy. Never since he went to the army.

Tag. How so?

Biddy. I was afraid the letters would fall into my aunt's hands, so I would not let him write to me; but I had a better reason then.

Tag. Pray let's hear that too.

Biddy. Why, I thought if I should write to him, and promise him to love no body else, and should afterwards change my mind, he might think I was inconstant, and call me a coquette.

Tag. What a simple innocent it is! [*Aside.*] And have you chang'd your mind, Miss?

Biddy. No indeed, Tag; I love him the best of any of 'em.

Tag. Of any of 'em! Why, have you any more?

Biddy. Pray don't ask me.

Tag. Nay, Miss, if you only trust me by halves, you can't expect—

Biddy. I will trust you with every thing.—When I parted with him, I grew melancholy; so in order to divert me, I have let two others court me till he returns again.

Tag. Is that all, my dear?—Mighty simple, indeed! [*Aside.*]

Biddy. One of 'em is a fine blustering man, and is call'd Captain Flash; he's always talking of fighting, and wars; we thinks he's sure of me, but I shall baulk him; we shall see him this afternoon, for he pres'd strongly to come, and I have given him leave, while my aunt's taking her afternoon's nap.

Tag. And who is the other, pray?

Biddy. Quite another sort of a man; he speaks like a lady for all the world, and never swears as Mr. Flash does, but wears nice white gloves, and tells me what ribbons become my complexion, where to stick my patches, who is the best milliner, where they sell the best tea, and which is the best wash for the face, and the best paste for the hands; he is always playing with my fan, and shewing his teeth; and whenever I speak he parts me—so—and cries, The devil take me, Miss Biddy, but you'll be my perdition—ha, ha, ha!

Tag. Oh, the pretty creature! And what do you call him, pray?

Biddy. His name's Fribble; you shall see him too, for by mistake I appointed 'em at the same time; but you must help me out with 'em.

Tag. And suppose your favourite should come too—

Biddy. I should not care what become of the others.

Tag. What's his name?

Biddy. It begins with an R—h—o—

Tag. I'll be hang'd if it is not Rhodophil.

Biddy. I am frightened at you! You are a witch, Tag!

Tag. I am so, and I can tell your fortune too. Look me in the face. The gentleman you love most in the world will be at our house this afternoon; he arriv'd from the army this morning, and dies till he sees you.

Biddy. Is he come, Tag? Don't joke with me—

Tag. Not to keep you longer in suspense, you must know the servant of your Strephon, by some unaccountable fate or other, is my lord and master; he has just been with me, told me of his master's arrival and impatience—

Biddy. Oh, my dear, dear Tag, you have put me out of my wits—I am all over in a flutter. I shall leap out of my skin—I don't know what to do with myself—Is he come, Tag?—I am ready to faint—I'd give the world I had put on my pink and silver robings to-day.

Tag. I assure you, Miss, you look charmingly!

Biddy. Do I indeed tho? I'll put a little patch under my left eye, and powder my hair immediately.

Tag. We'll go to dinner first, and then I'll assist you.

Biddy. Dinner! I can't eat a morsel—I don't know what's the matter with me—my ears tingle, my heart beats, my face flushes, and I tremble every joint of me—I must run in and look at myself in the glass this moment.

Tag. Yes, she has it, and deeply too; this is no hypocrisy—

Not art, but nature now performs her part,
And ev'ry word's the language of the heart.

ACT II. SCENE I.

SCENE continues.

Enter Captain Loveit, Biddy, Tag, and Puff.

Capt. **T**O find you still constant, and to arrive at such a critical juncture, is the height of fortune and happiness.

Biddy. Nothing shall force me from you; and if I am secure of your affections—

Puff. I'll be bound for him, Madam, and give you any security you can ask.

Tag. Every thing goes on to our wish, Sir; I just now had a second conference with my old lady, and she was so convinc'd by my arguments, that she return'd instantly to the lawyer, to forbid the drawing out of any writings at all, and she is determin'd never to thwart Miss's inclinations, and left it to us to give the old gentleman his discharge at the next visit.

Capt. Shall I undertake the old dragon?

Tag. If we have occasion for help, we shall call for you.

Biddy. I expect him every moment; therefore I'll tell you what, Rhodophil, you and your man shall be lock'd up in my bed-chamber till we have settled matters with the old gentleman.

Capt. Do what you please with me.

Biddy. You must not be impatient tho'.
Capt. I can undergo any thing with such a reward in view; one kiss, and I'll be quite resign'd—and now then we take the way. *[Exit.]*

Tag. Come, firrah, when I have got you under lock and key, I shall bring you to reason.

Puff. Are your wedding-clothes ready, my dove? The certificate's come.

Tag. Go, follow your Captain, firrah—march—You may thank heav'n I had patience to stay so long. *[Exeunt Tag and Puff.]*

Enter Biddy.

Biddy. I was very much alarm'd for fear my two gallants should come in upon us unawares; we should have had sad work if they had; I find I love Rhodophil vastly, for tho' my other sparks flatter me more, I can't abide the thoughts of 'em now—I have business upon my hands enough to turn my little head; but egad my heart's good, and a fig for dangers—Let me see, what shall I do with my two gallants? I must, at least, part with 'em decently; suppose I set 'em together by the ears?—The luckiest thought in the world! For if they won't quarrel (as I believe they won't) I can break with them for cowards; and very justly dismiss 'em my service; and if they will fight, and one of 'em should be kill'd, the other will certainly be hang'd or run away; and so I shall very handsomely get rid of both—I am glad I have settled it so purely.

Enter Tag.

Well, Tag, are they safe?

Tag. I think so; the door's double-locked, and I have the key in my pocket.

Biddy. That's pure; but have you given them any thing to divert 'em?

Tag. I have given the captain one of your old gloves to mumble; but my Strephon is diverting himself with the more substantial comforts of a cold ven'ison patty.

Biddy. What shall we do with the next that comes?

Tag. If Mr. Fribble comes first, I'll clap him up into my lady's store-room; I suppose he is a great maker of marmalade himself, and will have an opportunity of making some critical remarks upon our pastry and sweetmeats.

Biddy. When one of 'em comes, do you go and watch for the other, and as soon as you see him, run in to us and pretend it is my aunt, and so we shall have an excuse to lock him up till we want him.

Tag. You may depend upon me; here is one of 'em.

Enter Fribble.

Biddy. Mr. Fribble, your servant—

Frib. Miss Biddy, your slave—I hope I have not come upon you abruptly; I should have waited upon you sooner, but an accident happen'd that compos'd me so, that I was oblig'd to go home again to take drops.

Biddy. Indeed you don't look well, Sir.—Go, Tag, and do as I bid you.

Tag. I will, Madam. *[Exit.]*

Biddy. I have set my maid to watch my aunt, that we mayn't be surpris'd by her.

Frib. Your prudence is equal to your beauty, Miss; and I hope your permitting me to kiss your hands, will be no impeachment to your understanding.

Biddy. I hate the sight of him. *[Aside.]* I was afraid I should not have had the pleasure of seeing you; pray let me know what accident you met with, and what's the matter with your hand? I shan't be easy till I know.

Frib. Well, I vow, Miss Biddy, you're a good creature—I'll endeavour to muster up what little spirits I have, and tell you the whole affair—hem!—But first you must give me leave to make a present of a small pot of my lip-salve: my servant made it this morning; the ingredients are innocent, I assure you; nothing but the best virgin-wax, conserve of roses, and lily of the valley water.

Biddy. I thank you, Sir; but my lips are generally red, and when they an't, I bite 'em.

Frib. I bite my own, sometimes, to pout 'em a little, but this will give them a softness, colour, and an agreeable misser.—Thus let me make an humble offering at that shrine, where I have already sacrificed my heart. *[Kneels, and gives the Pot.]*

Biddy. Upon my word that's very prettily express'd; you are positively the best company in the world—I wish he was out of the house. *[Aside.]*

Frib. But to return to my accident; and the reason why my hand is in this condition—I beg you'll excuse the appearance of it, and be satisfi'd that nothing but mere necessity could have forc'd me to appear thus muffled before you.

Biddy. I am very willing to excuse any misfortune that happens to you, Sir. *[Curtsies.]*

Frib. You are vastly good, indeed—thus it was—hem!—You must know, Miss, there is not an animal in the creation I have so great an aversion to, as those hackney-coach fellows—as I was coming out of my lodgings, says one of 'em to me, Would your honour have a coach?—No, man, said I, not now; (with all the civility imaginable)—I'll carry you and your doll too, (said he) Miss Margery, for the same price—Upon which the masculine beasts about us fell a laughing; then I turn'd round in a great passion, Curse me, (says I) fellow, but I'll trounce thee.—And, as I was holding out my hand in a threatening posture—thus;—he makes a cut at me with his whip; and striking me over the nail of my little finger, it gave me such exquisite torture that I fainted away; and while I was in this condition, the mob pick'd my pocket of my purse, my scissars, my macco smelling-bottle, and my hufwife.

Biddy. I shall laugh in his face. *[Aside.]* I am afraid you are in great pain; pray sit down, Mr. Fribble; but I hope your hand is in no danger.

[They sit.]

Frib. Not in the least, Ma'am; pray don't be apprehensive—A milk-poultice, and a gentle sweat to-night, with a little manna in the morning, I am confident will relieve me entirely.

Biddy. But pray, Mr. Fribble, do you make use of a hufwife?

Frib. I can't do without it, Ma'am: there is a club of us, all young bachelors, the sweetest society in the world; and we meet three times a week at each other's lodgings, where we drink tea, hear the chat of the day, invent fashions for the ladies, make models of 'em, and cut our patterns in paper. We were the first inventors of knotting, and this fringe is the original produce and joint labour of our little community.

Biddy. And who are your pretty set, pray?

Frib. There's Phil. Whiffle, Jacky Wagtail, my Lord Trip, Billy Dimple, Sir Dilberry Diddle, and your humble—

Biddy. What a sweet collection of happy creatures!

Frib. Indeed, and so we are, Miss—But a prodigious fracas disconcerted us some time ago at Billy Dimple's—three drunken naughty women of the town burst into our club-room, curs'd us all, threw

down the china, broke six looking-glasses, scalded us with the slop-bason, and scratch'd poor Phil. Whiffle's cheek in such a manner, that he has kept his bed these three weeks.

Biddy. Indeed, Mr. Fribble, I think all our sex have great reason to be angry; for if you are so happy now you are batchelors, the ladies may wish and sigh to very little purpose.

Frib. You are mistaken, I assure you; I am prodigiously rallied about my passion for you, I can tell you that, and am look'd upon as lost to our society already; he, he, he!

Biddy. Pray, Mr. Fribble, now you have gone so far, don't think me impudent if I long to know how you intended to use the lady who has been honoured with your affections?

Frib. Not as most other wives are used, I assure you; all the domestick business will be taken off her hands; I shall make the tea, comb the dogs, and dress the children myself; so that tho' I'm a commoner, Mrs. Fribble will lead the life of a woman of quality, for she will have nothing to do, but lie in bed, play at cards, and scold the servants.

Biddy. What a happy creature she must be!

Frib. Do you really think so? Then pray let me have a little *serious* talk with you—Tho' my passion is not of a long standing, I hope the sincerity of my intentions—

Biddy. Ha, ha, ha!

Frib. Go, you wild thing. [*Pats her.*] The devil take me but there is no talking to you.—How can you use me in this barbarous manner! if I had the constitution of an alderman it would sink under my sufferings—*Hooman natur* can't support it.

Biddy. Why, what would you do with me, Mr. Fribble?

Frib. Well, I vow I'll beat you if you talk so—Don't look at me in that manner—flesh and blood can't bear it—I could—but I won't grow indecent—

Biddy. But pray, Sir, where are the verses you were to write upon me? I find if a young lady depends too much upon such fine gentlemen as you, she'll certainly be disappointed.

Frib. I vow, the flutter I was put into this afternoon has quite turn'd my senses—here they are tho'—and I believe you'll like 'em.

Biddy. There can be no doubt of it. [*Curtseys.*]

Frib. I protest, Miss, I don't like that curtsy—Look at me, and always rise in this manner. [*Shews her.*] But, my dear creature, who put on your cap to-day? They have made a fright of you, and it is as yellow as old Lady Crowfoot's neck.—When we are settled, I'll dress your head myself.

Biddy. Pray read the verses to me, Mr. Fribble.

Frib. I obey—hem!—William Fribble, Esq; to Miss Biddy Bellair—greeting.

*No ice so hard, so cold as I,
Till warm'd and soften'd by your eye;
And now my heart dissolves away
In dreams by night, in sighs by day.
No brutal passion fires my breast,
Which loath the object when possess'd;
But one of harmless, gentle kind,
Whose joys are center'd—in the mind;
Then take with me, love's better part,
His downy wing, but not his dart.*

How do you like 'em?

Biddy. Ha, ha, ha! I swear they are very pretty—but I don't quite understand 'em.

Frib. These light pieces are never so well understood in reading as singing; I have set 'em myself and will endeavour to give 'em you; La—la—I have

an abominable cold, and can't sing a note; however, the tune's nothing, the manner's all.

No ice so hard, &c.

[Sings.]

Enter Tag, running.

Tag. Your aunt, your aunt, your aunt, Madam!

Frib. What's the matter?

Biddy. Hide, hide Mr. Fribble, Tag, or we are ruin'd.

Frib. Oh! for Heav'n's sake, put me any where, so I don't dirty my clothes.

Biddy. Put him into the store-room, Tag, this moment.

Frib. Is it a damp place, Mrs. Tag? The floor is boarded, I hope?

Tag. Indeed it is not, Sir.

Frib. What shall I do? I shall certainly catch my death! where's my cambrick handkerchief, and my salts? I shall certainly have my hystericks!

[Runs in.]

Biddy. In, in, in—So now let the other come as soon as he will; I did not care if I had twenty of 'em, so they would but come one after another.

Enter Tag.

Was my aunt coming?

Tag. No, 'twas Mr. Flash, I suppose, by the length of his stride, and the cock of his hat. He'll be here this minute.—What shall we do with him?

Biddy. I'll manage him, I warrant you, and try his courage; be sure you are ready to second me—we shall have pure sport.

Tag. Hush! here he comes.

Enter Flash singing.

Flash. Well, my blossom, here am I! What hopes for a poor dog, eh? How! the maid here! then I've lost the town, dammee! not a shilling to bribe the governor; she'll spring a mine, and I shall be blown to the devil.

Biddy. Don't be aham'd, Mr. Flash; I have told Tag the whole affair, and she's my friend, I can assure you.

Flash. Is she? then she won't be mine, I am certain. [*Aside.*] Well, Mrs. Tag, you know I suppose, what's to be done: this young lady and I have contracted ourselves; and so, if you please to stand bride-maid, why we'll fix the wedding-day directly.

Tag. The wedding-day, Sir?

Flash. The wedding-day, Sir? Ay, Sir, the wedding-day, Sir; what have you to say to that, Sir?

Biddy. My dear Captain Flash, don't make such a noise, you'll wake my aunt.

Flash. And suppose I did, child; what then?

Biddy. She'd be frighten'd out of her wits.

Flash. At me, Miss! frighten'd at me? *Tout au contraire*, I assure you; you mistake the thing, child. I have some reason to believe I am not quite so shocking. [*Affectedly.*]

Tag. Indeed, Sir, you flatter yourself—But pray, Sir, what are your pretensions?

Flash. The lady's promises, my own passion, and the best mounted blade in the three kingdoms. If any man can produce a better title, let him take her; if not, the d---I mince me, if I give up an atom of her.

Biddy. He's in a fine passion, if he would but hold it. [*Aside.*]

Tag. Pray, Sir, hear reason a little.

Flash. I never do, Madam; it is not my method of proceeding; here is my logic! [*Draws his sword.*] *So, sa,*—my best argument is carte over arm, Madam, ha, ha, [*lunges.*] and if he answers that, Madam, through my small guts, my

breath, blood and mistress, are all at his service—
Nothing more, Madam.

Biddy. This'll do, this'll do.

Tag. But Sir, Sir, Sir!

Flash. But Madam, Madam, Madam: I profess blood, Madam, I was bred up to it from a child; I study the book of fate, and the camp is my university; I have attended the lectures of Prince Charles upon the Rhine, and Bathiani upon the Po, and have extracted knowledge from the mouth of a cannon; I'm not to be frighten'd with squibs, Madam, no, no.

Biddy. Pray, dear Sir, don't mind her, but let me prevail with you to go away this time—Your passion is very fine, to be sure; and when my aunt and Tag are out of the way, I'll let you know when I'd have you come again.

Flash. When you'd have me come again, child? And suppose I never would come again, what do you think of that now, ha? You pretend to be afraid of your aunt; your aunt knows what's what, too well to refuse a good match when 'tis offer'd—Lookee, Miss, I'm a man of honour, glory is my aim: I have told you the road I am in, and do you see here, child [*Showing his sword.*] No tricks upon travellers.

Biddy. But, pray, Sir, hear me.

Flash. No, no, no, I know the world, Madam: I am as well known at Covent-garden as the dial, Madam; I'll break a lamp, bully a constable, bat a justice, or bilk a box-keeper, with any man in the liberties of Westminster: What do you think of me now, Madam?

Biddy. Pray don't be so furious, Sir.

Flash. Come, come, come, few words are best, somebody's happier than somebody, and I am a poor silly fellow; ha, ha,—That's all—Look you, child, to be short, (for I'm a man of reflection) I have but a bagatelle to say to you: I am in love with you up to hell and desperation, may the sky crush me if I am not—But since there is another more fortunate than I, adieu, Biddy! prosperity to the happy rival, patience to poor Flash; but the first time we meet—gunpowder be my perdition, but I'll have the honour to cut a throat with him. [*Going.*]

Biddy. [*Stopping him.*] You may meet with him now if you please.

Flash. Now may I!—Where is he! I'll sacrifice the villain. [*Aloud.*]

Tag. Hush! he's but in the next room.

Flash. Is he? Ram me [*Low.*] into a mortar-piece, but I'll have vengeance; my blood boils to be at him—Don't be frighten'd, Miss!

Biddy. No, Sir, I never was better pleas'd, I assure you.

Flash. I shall soon do his business.

Biddy. As soon as you please; take your own time.

Tag. I'll fetch the gentleman to you immediately. [*Going.*]

Flash. [*Stopping her.*] Stay, stay, a little; what a passion I am in—Are you sure he is in the next room?—I shall certainly tear him to pieces—I would fain murder him like a gentleman too—Besides, this family shan't be brought into trouble upon my account—I have it—I'll watch for him in the street, and mix his blood with the puddle of the next kennel. [*Going.*]

Biddy. [*Stopping him.*] No, pray, Mr. Flash, let me see the battle, I shall be glad to see you fight for me; you shan't go, indeed. [*Holding him.*]

Tag. [*Holding him.*] Oh, pray, let me see you fight; there were two gentlemen fit yesterday, and my mistress was never so diverted in her life—I'll

fetch him out.

Biddy. Do, stick him; stick him, Captain Flash; I shall love you the better for it.

Flash. Don't your love, I wish I was out of the house. [*Aside.*]

Biddy. Here he is—Now speak some of your hard words, and run him through—

Flash. Don't be in fits now— [*Aside to Biddy.*]

Biddy. Never fear me.

Enter Tag and Fribble.

Tag. [*To Fribble.*] Take it on my word, Sir, he is a bully, and nothing else.

Frib. [*Frighten'd.*] I know you are my good friend, but perhaps you don't know his disposition.

Tag. I am confident he is a coward.

Frib. Is he? Nay, then I'm his man.

Flash. I like his looks, but I'll not venture too far at first.

Tag. Speak to him, Sir.

Frib. I will—I understand, Sir,—hem,—that you—by Mrs. Tag here,—Sir,—who has informed me—hem,—that you would be glad to speak with me—demme—

Flash. I can speak to you, Sir,—or to any body, Sir,—or I can let it alone and hold my tongue,—if I see occasion, Sir, dammee— [*Turns off.*]

Biddy. Well said, Mr. Flash; be in a passion.

Tag. [*To Fribble.*] Don't mind his looks; he changes colour already; to him, to him.

[*Pushes him.*]

Frib. Don't hurry me, Mrs. Tag, for heaven's sake! I shall be out of breath before I begin, if you do—Sir—[*To Flash.*] if you can't speak to a gentleman in another manner, Sir, why then I'll venture to say, you had better hold your tongue—
Ouns.

Flash. Sir, you and I are of different opinions.

Frib. You and your opinion may go to the devil—ake that. [*Turns off to Tag.*]

Tag. Well said, Sir, the day's your own.

Biddy. What's the matter, Mr. Flash? Is all your fury gone? Do you give me up?

Frib. I have done his business. [*Struts about.*]

Flash. Give you up, Madam! No, Madam, when I am determin'd to my resolutions I am always calm; 'tis our way, Madam; and now I shall proceed to business—Sir, I beg to say a word to you in private.

Frib. Keep your distance, fellow, and I'll answer you.—That lady has confes'd a passion for me, and as she has delivered up her heart into my keeping, nothing but my arts blood shall purchase it. Damnation!

Tag. Bravo! Bravo!

Flash. If those are the conditions, I'll give you earnest for it directly. [*Draws.*] Now, villain, renounce all right and title this minute, or the torrent of my rage will overflow my reason, and I shall annihilate the nothingness of your soul and body in an instant.

Frib. I wish there was a constable at hand to take us both up; we shall certainly do one another a prejudice.

Tag. No, you won't indeed, Sir; pray bear up to him; if you would but draw your sword, and be in a passion, he would run away directly.

Frib. Will he? [*Draws his sword.*] Then I can no longer contain myself—Hell and the furies! Come on, thou savage brute.

Tag. Go on, Sir.

[*Here they stand in fighting postures, while Biddy and Tag push 'em forward.*]

Flash. Come on.

Biddy. Go on.

Frib. Come on, rascal!

Tag. Go on, Sir.

Enter Captain Loveit and Puff.

Capt. What's the matter, my dear?

Biddy. If you won't fight, here's one that will. Oh, Rhodophil, these two sparks are your rivals, and have pester'd me these two months with their addresses; they forced themselves into the house, and have been quarreling about me, and disturbing the family; if they won't fight, pray kick 'em out of the house.

Capt. What's the matter, gentlemen?

[They both keep their fencing posture.]

Flash. Don't part us, Sir.

Frib. No, pray, Sir, don't part us, we shall do you a mischief.

Capt. Puff, look to the other gentleman, and call a surgeon.

Biddy and Tag. Ha, ha, ha!

Puff. Bless me! how can you stand under your wounds, Sir?

Frib. Am I hurt, Sir?

Puff. Hurt, Sir! why you have—let me see—pray stand in the light—one, two, three, thro' the heart; and let me see—hum—eight thro' the small guts! Come, Sir, make it up the round dozen, and then we'll part you.

All. Ha, ha, ha!

Capt. Come here, Puff.

[Whispers, and looks at Flash.]

Puff. 'Tis the very same, Sir.

Capt. *[To Flash.]* Pray, Sir, have I not had the pleasure of seeing you abroad?

Flash. I have serv'd abroad.

Capt. Had not you the misfortune, Sir, to be minding at the last engagement in Flanders?

Flash. I was found amongst the dead in the field of battle.

Puff. He was the first that fell, Sir; the wind of a cannon-ball struck him flat upon his face; he had just strength enough to creep into a ditch, and there he was found after the battle in a most deplorable condition.

Capt. Pray, Sir, what advancement did you get by the service of that day?

Flash. My wounds rendered me unfit for service, and I fold out.

Puff. Stole out, you mean.—We hunted him by sea to the water-side, thence he took shipping for England, and taking the advantage of my master's absence, has attack'd the citadel, which we are luckily come to relieve, and drive his honour into the ditch again.

All. Ha, ha, ha!

Frib. He, he, he!

Capt. And now, Sir, how have you dar'd to shew your face in open day, or wear even the outside of a profession you have so much scandaliz'd by your behaviour? I honour the name of soldier, and as a party concerned am bound not to see it disgrac'd. As you have forfeited your title to honour, deliver up your sword this instant.

Flash. Nay, good Captain—

Capt. No words, Sir.

[Takes his sword.]

Frib. He's a sad scoundrel; I wish I had kick'd him.

Capt. The next thing I command—leave this house, change the colour of your clothes and fierceness of your looks, appear from top to toe the wretch, the very wretch thou art; if e'er I meet thee in the military dress again, or if you put on looks that belye the native baseness of thy heart, be it where it will, this shall be the reward of thy im-

pudence and disobedience. *[Kicks him, he runs off.]*

Biddy. Oh, my dear Rhodophil!

Frib. What an infamous rascal it is! I thank you Sir, for this favour; but I must after, and catch him. *[Going, is kept by the Captain.]*

Capt. One word with you, too, Sir.

Frib. With me, Sir!

Capt. You need not tremble, I shan't use you roughly.

Frib. I am certain of that, Sir; but I am sadly troubled with weak nerves.

Capt. Thou art of a species too despicable for correction; therefore be gone; and if I see you here again, your insignificance shan't protect you.

Frib. I am obliged to you for your kindness;—well, if I have any thing to do with intrigues again!—*[Exit.]*

All. Ha, ha, ha!

Puff. Shall I ease you of your trophy, Sir?

Capt. Take it, Puff, as a small recompence for thy fidelity; thou canst better use it than its owner.

Puff. I wish your honour had a patent to take such trifles from every pretty gentleman that could spare 'em; I would set up the largest cutler's shop in the kingdom.

Capt. Well said, Puff.

Biddy. But pray, Mr. Fox, how did you get out of your hole? I thought you was lock'd in?

Capt. I shot the bolt back when I heard a noise, and thinking you was in danger, I broke my confinement without any other consideration than your safety. *[Kisses her hand.]*

Sir Simon. *[Without.]* Biddy, Biddy; Why Tag, Tag.

Biddy. There's the old gentleman; run in, run in.

Exit: Captain and Puff. Tag opens the door.

Enter Sir Simon and Jasper.

Sir Simon. Where have you been, Biddy? Jasper and I have knock'd and call'd as loud and as long as we are able: What were you doing, child?

Biddy. I was reading part of a play to Tag, and we came as soon as we heard you.

Sir Simon. What play, moppet?

Tag. The Old Bachelor; and we were just got to old Nykyn as you knocked at the door.

Sir Simon. I must have you burn your plays and romances now you are ming; they corrupt your innocence; and what can you learn from 'em?

Biddy. What you can't teach me, I'm sure.

Sir Simon. Fye, fye, child; I never heard you talk at this rate before; I'm afraid, Tag, you put these things into her head.

Tag. I, Sir? I vow, Sir Simon, she knows more than you can conceive; she surprizes me, I assure you, though I have been married these two years, and liv'd with bachelors most part of my life.

Sir Simon. Do you hear, Jasper? I'm all over in a sweat.—Pray, Miss, have you not had company this afternoon? I saw a young fop go out of the house as I was coming hither.

Biddy. You might have seen two, Sir Simon; if your eyes had been good.

Sir Simon. Do you hear, Jasper?—Sure the child is possess'd.—Pray, Miss, what do they want here?

Biddy. Me, Sir; they wanted me.

Sir Simon. What did they want with you, I say?

Biddy. Why, what do you want with me?

Sir Simon. Do you hear, Jasper?—I am thunder-struck! I can't believe my own ears!—Tell me the reason, I say why.

Tag. I'll tell you the reason why, if you please, Sir Simon. Miss, you know, is a very silly young girl, and having found out *[Heaven knows how!]*

that there is some little difference between sixty-five and twenty-five, she's ridiculous enough to chuse the latter; when if she'd taken my advice—

Sir Simon. You are right, Tag; she would have taken me. Eh?

Tag. Yes, Sir, as the only way to have both; for if she marries you, the other will follow of course.

Sir Simon. Do you hear, Jasper?

Biddy. 'Tis very true, Sir Simon; from knowing no better, I have set my heart upon a young man, and a young one I'll have; there have been three here this afternoon.

Sir Simon. Three, Jasper?

Biddy. And they have been quarreling about me, and one has beat the other two. Now, Sir Simon, if you'll take up the conqueror, and kick him, as he has kick'd the others, you shall have me for your reward, and my fifteen thousand pounds into the bargain. What says my hero, eh?

[Slaps him on the back.]

Sir Simon. The world's at an end—What's to be done, Jasper?

Jasper. Pack up and be gone; don't fight the match, Sir.

Sir Simon. Flesh and blood can't bear it—I'm all over agitation—hugh, hugh!—am I cheated by a baby, a doll? Where's your aunt, you young cockatrice—I'll let her know—she's a bafe woman, and you are—

Biddy. You are in a fine humour to shew your valour. Tag, fetch the Captain this minute, while Sir Simon is warm, and let him know he is waiting here to cut his throat. [Exit Tag.] I lock'd him up in my bed-chamber till you came.

Sir Simon. Here's an imp of darkness! What would I give that my son Bob was here to thrash her spark, while I—ravish'd the rest of the family.

Jasper. I believe we had best retire, Sir.

Sir Simon. No, no, I must see her bully first; and do you hear, Jasper! if I put him in a passion, do you knock him down.

Jasper. Pray keep your temper, Sir.

Enter Captain, Tag, and Puff.

Capt. [Approaching angrily.] What is the meaning, Sir?—Ounds! it is my father, Puff; what shall I do?

[Aside.]

Puff. [Drawing him by the coat.] Kneel again, Sir.

Sir Simon. I am enchanted! [Starting.]

Capt. There's no retreat; I must stand it!

Biddy. What's all this?

Sir Simon. Your humble servant, Captain Fire-Ball—You are welcome from the wars, noble Captain. I did not think of being knock'd o'th' head, or cut up alive by so fine a gentleman.

Capt. I am under such confusion, Sir, that I have not power to convince you of my innocence.

Sir Simon. Innocence! pretty lamb! And so, Sir, you have left the regiment, and the honourable employment of fighting for your country, to come home and cut your father's throat; why you'll be a great man in time, Bob!

Biddy. His father, Tag!

Sir Simon. Come, come, 'tis soon done—one stroke does it—or if you have any qualms, let your quire there perform the operation.

Puff. Pray, Sir, don't throw such temptations in my way.

Capt. Hold your impudent tongue!

Sir Simon. Why don't you speak, Mr. Modesty; what excuse have you for leaving the army, I say?

Capt. My affection to this lady.

Sir Simon. Your affection, puppy!

Capt. Our love, Sir, has been long and mutual.

what accidents have happen'd since my going abroad, and her leaving the country, and how I have most unaccountably met you here, I am a stranger to; but whatever appearances may be, I still am, and ever was, your dutiful son.

Biddy. He talks like an angel, Tag!

Sir Simon. Dutiful, sirrah! have not you rival'd your father?

Capt. No, Sir, you have rival'd me; my claim must be prior to yours.

Biddy. Indeed, Sir Simon, he can shew the best title to me.

Jasper. Sir, Sir, the young gentleman speaks well, and as the fortune will not go out of the family, I should advise you to drop your resentment, be reconciled to your son, and relinquish the lady.

Sir Simon. Ay, ay, with all my heart—look ye, son, I give you the girl; she's too much for me. I confess;—And take my word, Bob, you'll catch a tartar.

Biddy. I assure you, Sir Simon, I'm not the person you take me for; if I have us'd you any ways ill, 'twas for your son's sake, who had my promise and inclinations before you; and tho' I believe I should have made you a most uncomfortable wife, I'll be the best daughter to you in the world; and if you stand in need of a lady, my aunt is disengag'd, and is the best nurse—

Sir Simon. No, no, I thank you child; you have so turn'd my stomach to marriage, I have no appetite left—But where is this aunt? Won't she stop your proceedings, think you?

Tag. She's now at her lawyer's, Sir, and if you please to go with the young couple, and give your approbation, I'll answer for my old lady's consent.

Biddy. The Captain and I, Sir—

Sir Simon. Come, come, Bob, you are but an ensign; don't impose on the girl neither.

Capt. I had the good fortune, Sir, to please my royal general by my behaviour in a small action with the enemy, and he gave me a company.

Sir Simon. Bob, I wish you joy! This is news indeed! And when we celebrate your wedding, son, I'll drink a half-pint bumper myself to your benefactor.

Capt. And he deserves it, Sir; such a general by his example and justice, animates us to deeds of glory, and insures us conquest.

Sir Simon. Right, my boy—come along then.

[Going.]

Puff. Halt a little, gentlemen and ladies, if you please: every body here seems well satisfied but myself.

Capt. What's the matter, Puff?

Puff. Sir, as I would make myself worthy of such a master, and the name of a soldier, I cannot put up the least injury to my honour.

Sir Simon. Heyday! What flourishes are these?

Puff. Here is the man; come forth, caltiff. [To Jasper.] He hath confess'd this day, that in my absence, he hath taken freedoms with my lawful wife, and had dishonourable intentions against my bed; for which I demand satisfaction.

Sir Simon. [Striking him.] What stuff is here; the fellow's brain's turn'd.

Puff. And crack'd too, Sir; but you are my master's father, and I submit.

Capt. Come, come, I'll settle your punctilios, and will take care of you and Tag hereafter, provided you drop all animosities, and shake hands this moment.

Puff. My revenge gives way to my interest; and I once again, Jasper, take thee to my bosom.

Jasper. I'm your friend again, I Puff—but hark ye—I fear you not; and if you'll lay aside your fire there, as far as a broken head or a black eye, I'm at your service upon demand.

Tag. You are very good at crowing indeed, Mr Jasper; but let me tell you, the fool that is a rogue enough to brag of a woman's favours, must be a dunghill every way—as for you, my dear husband, show your manhood in a proper place, and you need not fear these sheep-biters.

Sir Simon. The Avigail is pleasant I confess, he be!

Biddy. I'm afraid the town will be ill-natured enough to think I have been a little coquette in my behaviour; but I hope, as I have been constant to the captain, I shall be excus'd diverting myself with pretenders.

**Ladies, to fops and braggarts ne'er be kind,
No charms can warm 'em, and no virtues bind;
Each lover's merit by his conduct prove,
Who fails in honour, will be false in love.**

[Exeunt omnes.]

